

**RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES
DECEMBER 6, 2001**

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Frances Werner, William Branan, Steve Saway, Sanford Cohen, Sandee McCullen, Mary Dahl, Lee Aitken, Rick Holloway, Lamar Smith and Norman Wallen.

ABSENT: David Bertelsen, John Neal, Christine Newell, Ralph Ogden and Lorraine Eiler.

BLM STAFF IN ATTENDANCE: Denise Meridith, Bill Civish, John Christensen, Don Ellsworth, Roger Taylor, Shela McFarlin, Steve Gobat, Tim Hughes, Tony Herrell, Keith Hughes, Don Charpio, Bill Grossi, Gregg Simmons, Ken Mahoney, Deborah Stevens and Linda Garrison.

NEXT RAC MEETING: February 28 - March 1, 2002, Tucson, AZ. (1st day: Ironwood National Monument and ASARCO Mine Tours; 2nd day: Business Meeting).

AGENDA ITEM: Call to Order, (Frances Werner, RAC Chairperson)

DISCUSSION: Frances Werner called the meeting to order. Frances welcomed Lee Aitken, William Branan, Sanford Cohen, and Mary Dahl, as new RAC council members. She stated that she and the Council looks forward to their participation on the Board. Introductions were then made around the room.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Review of Previous Meeting's Minutes, (Frances Werner, Chairperson)

DISCUSSION: No corrections were noted in the draft minutes of the July 23-24, 2001 meeting.

ACTION: The Chair asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes as written. The motion was entered by William Branan and seconded by Norm Wallen. The minutes were approved.

AGENDA ITEM: BLM State Directors Update on Regulations and other Statewide Issues, (Denise Meridith, State Director)

DISCUSSION: Denise Meridith welcomed everyone, especially our newest members of the Council, Lee Aitken, William Branan, Sanford Cohen, and Mary Dahl. She stated she is looking forward to getting to know the new members and working with them in the near future. Denise thanked everyone for taking the time from your busy schedules to join us this morning. It's been a few months since our last RAC meeting in Payson this summer. A lot has happened in the United States since then, but Americans on all fronts are showing their resiliency and patriotism. Before we get started with today's presentations, there are a number of items I'd like to bring to your attention.

I am going on a special assignment for the Washington Office for the next few months. I will be working with others on developing criteria guidelines for BLM's future partnerships (will be an association for associations). It will be known as the "Foundation for BLM". There will mostly likely be a workshop conference in Las Vegas in May that will bring people from around the country together to discuss this concept. I am seeking your assistance in providing me information on examples of successful foundations, point of contact and phone numbers in three specific areas: 1). Case studies of friends groups and community partnerships; 2). Topics you would like to see on the agenda and suggested speakers for the conference; and 3). Comments/suggestions regarding lessons learned and starting up and maintaining support groups for special areas. If you are sending comments from home or an outside group is sending in information use my personal e-mail address: dmeridith2@home.com or for internal use my BLM e-mail address: denise_meridith@blm.gov.

I will continue to be the BLM-Arizona State Director during this period and will at times work in BLM-Nevada State Office in addition to working here at my office. Carl Rountree, my Associate State Director, will be acting for me when I am in travel status.

Joe Lane, the Governor of Arizona's representative on the RAC, will be retiring in December. The Governor has asked Joe to continue on the RAC until November 2002 elections are completed.

25th Anniversary of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act: This year marks the 25th anniversary of the passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 -- a landmark piece of legislation that changed not only the Bureau of Land Management and the make-up of its workforce, but the face of the West forever.

Best Kept Secret Award: Several weeks ago, the Arizona Public Lands Information Center was honored by the Copper Square Downtown Partnership with the "**Best Kept Secret**" award. The PLIC was honored for providing outstanding recreation information to the public. This award is the second honor Joanna Scruggs and the PLIC has received this year. The PLIC also received the "**Bootstrap**" award at the Governor's Conference on Tourism in August. This prestigious award is given to the individual, organization, or community that has achieved significant success despite limited resources or finances.

Las Cienegas Dedication: BLM dedicated the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area (NCA) on Saturday, October 27. The celebration took place at the historic Empire Ranch Headquarters located in the NCA special guests included Congressman Jim Kolbe, former BLM National Director Frank Gregg, former Arizona State Director Dean Bibbes, WO staff: Henri Bisson, Elaine Marque-Brong, and Jesse Juen. It was an outstanding event with exhibits and activities sponsored by the Empire Ranch Foundation and other local partners.

Payment In Lieu of Taxes: BLM sent just over \$199 million on September 20, to approximately 1,900 local governments across the United States in accordance with the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) Act. This year's payment is \$65 million more than last year's payment. Arizona counties received \$16,057,080 to help fund vital community services, such as firefighting and police protection, and construction of hospitals and public schools.

3809 Regulations: On October 30, BLM published a final rule in the Federal Register to modify the

agency's 3809 surface mining regulations, enhancing BLM's ability to protect the environment, public land resources, and public health. BLM is amending the current 3809 regulations that became effective January 20, 2001. BLM is retaining most of the provisions, while eliminating or modifying a few elements that are unduly burdensome, legally questionable or unnecessary.

Land and Water Conservation Funds Acquire AZ Private Wilderness Inholdings: Arizona's reality staff have made some great strides and finalized thirteen separate acquisitions (1538 acres) of private properties from willing sellers within the various BLM Wilderness areas in Arizona. The inholdings will be purchased with Land and Water Conservation Funds. Another eight wilderness parcels are pending preliminary title opinions from the Solicitor.

Arrastra Mountain Wilderness Decision Update: Ararra Mountain Wilderness is still on everyone's radar screen. BLM is still working to resolve the lawsuits by the grazing permittee, Barnes, and the National Wildlife Federation, regarding two BLM decisions on range developments and access to private inholdings. The U.S. District Court was given notice on October 15, 2001, that Deputy Secretary of the Interior J. Steven Griles decided to rescind the decision of former Assistant Secretary Baca. Deputy Secretary Griles further decided to stay implementation of the decisions until February 12, 2002. During the period of the stay, the Assistant U.S. Attorney, representing BLM in court, will work with the parties in the lawsuit to explore options for settlement.

Dos Pobres/San Juan Phelps Dodge Project/FEIS Production Schedule: Another issue of interest to Washington and the Department of Interior is the Dos Pobres/San Juan Project. Before BLM can publish the Final EIS, it must complete three notable tasks, including: 1) Obtain the Biological Opinion of the USFW, 2) Obtain SHPO concurrence on Draft Treatment Plan for cultural resources, and 3) Obtain guidance from Washington Office on the treatment of potential impacts to groundwater resources/Native American Trust Assets.

On October 10, the BLM and BIA completed a draft briefing paper on the groundwater issue and modeled impacts and submitted the paper to the Washington Office for review. Tasks 1 & 2 will be complete within 45 days. Upon receiving advice from the Washington Office concerning the groundwater issue, it will take approximately 14 weeks to finalize, print, and distribute the preliminary final EIS for internal review.

Wild Horse and Burro Adoptions: The last two wild horse and burro adoptions for the year were held in Camp Verde on October 12 & 13, and Buckeye on November 16 & 17. BLM adopted 66 animals (45 horses and 21 burros). Eleven adoptions are planned in FY 2002.

National Public Lands Day: Arizona BLM received outstanding participation for all its National Public Land Day (NPLD) events in late September. The State Office co-sponsored the Fourth Annual NPLD Outdoor Recreation Fair, with the City of Phoenix Parks, Recreation and Library Department, and the Arizona Public Lands Information Center on September 28. There were 26 exhibits, hosted by federal, state, and local government agencies. Two additional events were held in Kingman in the Black Mountains, and the Agua Fria National Monument. Volunteers gathered to work on field projects and enjoy the public lands.

BLM and The Nature Conservancy Continue Longstanding Partnership: On September 6, 2001, Pat

Graham, Arizona Director of The Nature Conservancy, and I signed a Memorandum of Understanding to formalized its more than 20-year partnership in natural resources management and conservation in Arizona. The agreement covers cooperation and coordination in identifying wildlife and plant resources, restoring ecosystems, and acquiring conservation easements on environmentally sensitive lands.

WOW Receives National Award: The American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) was recognized nationally The Wonderful Outdoor World (WOW). The honors garnered WOW with the Award of Excellence in the 2001 “Associations Advance America Awards” program. The WOW program is designed to bring the great outdoors to children in their neighborhood parks, and teach the children a variety of outdoor skills. The ASAE award recognizes associations and industry partners that advance American society with innovative programs in education, skills training, and standard setting.

Lamar Smith: How is the money calculated on the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT)?

Answer: Congress appropriates PLIT payments annually, and BLM administers disbursement to individual counties. These figures reflect the total PILT for all Federal land in the state. The PILT payments are determined according to a formula that includes population, the amount of Federal land within the county, and offsets for certain Federal payments to counties such as timber, minerals leasing and grazing receipts.

Rick Holloway: Are land exchanges between the BLM and the State of Arizona still going on? *Denise Meridith:* Portions of the exchanges are still proceeding, but without passage of State Bill 100 there is not much they can do.

Deborah Stevens: BLM is in the process of completing two parts of the agreement-in-lieu selections and the Fort Huachuca. Legislation needs to be completed on the rest of the agreement.

Sandee McCullen: Are these event dates you mentioned on the webpage or can we get a calendar of events? *Denise Meridith:* Yes, Deborah Stevens will send one to anyone interested.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Update on the Draft Las Cienegas Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, (Keith Hughes and Tony Herrell, BLM Tucson Field Office)

DISCUSSION: Keith Hughes introduced himself saying he recently moved from BLM-CA, Redding Field Office, to accept a position with the BLM AZ, Tucson Field Office. He gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Draft Las Cienegas Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement. (See copy of PowerPoint presentation for full report).

Summary outline as follows:

Background:

- 1988 - Empire-Cienegas RAC acquired
- 1989 - Land Use plan initiated

- 1993 - Planning suspended
- 1995 - Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership (SVPP)
- 2000 - Las Cienegas NCA designated

- 2001 - Draft Las Cienegas Plan released

Desired Future Condition Issues:

- Watershed/upland vegetation management
- Riparian area management
- Fish and Wildlife habitat management
- Visual resource management
- Economics/quality of life

Land Use Allocation Issues:

- Mineral development
- Utility corridors
- Off-highway vehicle designations
- Recreation management
- Livestock grazing management

Special Designation Area Issues:

- Areas of critical environmental concerns

Vision of Desired Future Conditions:

- The Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership will work together to perpetuate naturally functioning ecosystems while preserving the rural, grassland character of the Sonotia Valley for future generations.

Goals of Desired Future Conditions:

- Maintain and improve watershed health and native wildlife habitats and populations
- Maintain and restore native plant diversity
- Protect water quality and quantity
- Maintain scenic beauty and open space
- Sustain compatible uses of the land
- Promote stewardship of resources
- Preserve and protect cultural resources

Resource Objectives for Desired Conditions:

- Watershed and upland vegetation
- Riparian vegetation
- Aquatic habitat
- Fish and wildlife management
- Cultural resources
- Recreation opportunities

Plan Alternatives Consist of:

- Four alternatives, includes current management (no action)
- Each alternative divided into land use plan and activity (implementation) plan parts
- Incorporation of NCA legislation into alternatives
- Alternatives apply only to public lands with exception of grazing management

Alternative 1 - Current Management (No action):

- Continues current management under interim management in Phoenix RMP and interim grazing plan
- Emphasis on federally listed T&E species
- Allocations limited to continuing existing livestock leases and continued closure to mineral exploration and development

- Does not designate utility corridors, ACECs, recreation zones, or AZ Trail corridor

Alternative 2 - Agency Preferred:

- Emphasizes ecosystem management, partnerships and collaboration
- Biological Planning Team emphasized
- Designates 2 utility corridors, recreation zones and AZ Trail
- Grazing management with variable stocking and flexible rotations
- Closes or restricts use of some roads
- Preferred by SVPP participants

Alternative 3:

- Allows greatest mix of land uses with restrictions to protect sensitive areas
- Designates 2 small ACECs
- Livestock grazing continues with reduced, fixed stocking rates
- Designates 3 utility corridors, recreation zones and AZ trail
- Fewest road closures and restrictions
- Emphasizes mix of motorized and non-motorized recreation

Alternative 4:

- Emphasizes land use closures and restrictions and limits on development to achieve objectives
- Public lands remain closed to mining and are closed to livestock grazing
- Designates all public lands as ACEC
- Designates 1 utility corridor, recreation zones and AZ trail on existing roads
- Provides most area for dispersed recreation

Visual Resource Management:

- Designate public lands as VRM Class II with objective to retain existing character of landscape
- Changes to landscape should not attract attention of casual observer and should repeat basic elements of existing landscape including form, color, line and texture

Grazing Management:

- Alternative 1: Four allotments, operate Empire-Cienegas under interim grazing plan with flexible stocking and biological planning
- Alternative 2: Five allotments, all allotments with flexible stocking and rotations and using biological planning
- Alternative 3: Five allotments, all with fixed conservative stocking rate
- Alternative 4: No grazing on public lands

Recreation Management:

- Designate recreation zones to maintain recreation settings and opportunities
- Establish management guidelines for zones
- Designate group sites and camp areas in Zone 2
- Continue dispersed recreation opportunities in Zone 3
- Designate AZ Trail corridor
- Pursue SLUP and associated fee program

Public Input:

- 90-day comment period ended November 23, 2001
- Held Public Meetings September 25, Sonoita; September 26, Mesa; September 27, Tucson
- 28 comments received (consisting of: 6 Agency, 5 organizations, 17 individual)
- 9 comments explicitly supported Preferred Alternative

- Most comments supported grazing with various modifications
- Split opinions on access and vehicular use

Work Remaining:

- Interdisciplinary RMP team develops responses to comments
- Modify alternatives where warranted
- Select Alternative
- Finalize Section 7 Consult with Fish and Wildlife Services
- Publish Final RMP and Record of Decision

Rick Holloway: I recently heard that the Supreme Court of AZ has ruled that land previously leased for grazing can now be leased for non-grazing purposes.

Norm Wallen: Clarification is needed on whether the State can lease land to conservation groups whether or not they intend to use it for grazing, as long as they are the highest bidder.

Lamar Smith: You do have the option when leasing whether to stock or not stock. But the State is actually making less money if the land is not used for grazing because you would normally pay for each livestock that is on the land.

The RAC would like to have someone come in and tell them how the law interprets and what affect it will have on BLM lands. Would like a report on BLM's history of court cases on grazing issues to get an idea of how many cases BLM wins. *Denise Meridith* suggested Rich Greenfield, BLM Attorney.

William Branan: Complimented BLM (TFO) on the way they involved the public in the process Sonora Valley Partnership. He believes that it was a huge step for BLM.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Update on National-off-Highway Vehicle Use Strategy, (Don Charpio, BLM Resource Advisor)

DISCUSSION: Don Charpio briefed everyone on Arizona's status in implementing the BLM's National-Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Strategy. BLM-AZ has been actively working the issues in the National Strategy as part of the agency's partnership with Arizona State Parks (ASP) OHV Fund Program. Through a variety (over 40) grants BLM-AZ field offices have addressed inventory, access, support facilities, mitigation and maintenance projects related to OHV use and impacts. BLM-AZ has built campsites, staging areas and even hot tubs with the funding received from AZ State Parks. Projects have been completed in all field offices. BLM-AZ initiated one of the first route inventory mapping and access guide projects in the country, and has produced a highly regarded set of OHV access guides with route numbers, land ownership, safety and land use ethics messages. To support BLM-AZ's OHV management efforts, the State of AZ has recently signed an assistance agreement providing us \$250,000 annually for the next three years to complete OHV planning and projects.

Arizona State University complete a statewide trail and OHV use study for Arizona State Parks which resulted in producing a statewide OHV and trails plan called: "Trails 2000." This study surveyed over 40,000 Arizona residents and land use managers and clearly identifies the key issues and priorities for OHV efforts in Arizona. The statewide plan provides BLM-AZ valid scientific information on which to

make land use decision relative to OHV projects and policy. The members of the RAC were given some examples of priority issues identified in the study, and were given the Arizona State Parks web address to view the full report. The number one concern for OHV users in Arizona is the potential closure of roads/areas to OHV use. Examples were given of how field offices efforts to include the public in projects and planning are helping to keep the public informed and providing them a sense of ownership in BLM's management efforts.

To keep the OHV issue in the forefront to the field offices, the planning coordinators received a training session on the findings of the State Parks study and the importance of addressing transportation planning in general as part of all upcoming land use plans this past year. The Phoenix Field Office OHV route-mapping project will be used as a national model for gathering data on roads/routes for the upcoming land use plans. This effort is a federal and state partnership using a Forest Service enterprise team to complete seamless route inventories of State, BLM and USFS lands.

He reported that the National Plan suggest strongly that each BLM State Office have an OHV Coordinator, and that Washington Office dollars have been promised for these positions. BLM-AZ is working to fill this position by spring of 2002, however it will be renamed as *Access and Transportation Coordinator*.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement on Conservation and Restoration Treatments, (Bill Grossi, BLM-AZ Wildlife Biologist).

DISCUSSION: Frances Werner introduced Bill Grossi the BLM-AZ Wildlife Biologist. Bill gave a presentation on the programmatic environmental Impact Statement on Conservation and Restoration Treatments.

BLM will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the conservation and restoration of vegetation, watershed and wildlife habitat treatments on public lands in the western U.S., including Alaska. The comprehensive EIS will update and replace analyses contained in four existing vegetation treatment and noxious weed management EISs completed from 1986 to 1992. The EIS will consider reasonably foreseeable activities planned in each state, to include reduction and treatment of highly flammable forest and rangeland fuel (trees, brush and other plants that have accumulated). Treatment activities may include prescribed fire, riparian restoration, restoration of native plant communities, control of invasive plants and noxious weeds, thinning of forest under-story, forest health activities, and other treatment projects in ecosystems where fire has historically played an active role.

Issues that have been initially identified for analysis during the EIS process are:

- Reduction and treatment of highly flammable forest and rangeland fuel
- Noxious weed control activities
- Restoration of ecosystem processes
- Protection of cultural resources
- Watershed and vegetative community health
- Habitat improvement activities for listed species
- New chemical formulations for herbicides that may be more environmentally favorable than those

now being used

- Smoke management and air quality
- Emergency stabilization and restoration of wildfire-affected landscapes
- Watershed and water quality improvement

The BLM's interdisciplinary project team will coordinate closely with local, state and tribal governments, in addition to working with the Western Governors Association and the National Association of Counties. A public scoping meeting will be held in Phoenix on January 16, from 6 to 9 p.m., at the Holiday Inn-Crowne Plaza in Peoria.

Lamar Smith: How specific could your EIS analysis on a type of vegetation treatment manipulation that could be applied to the other areas? *Bill Civish:* We are going to analyze the methods we use for EIS purpose. *Gregg Simmons:* We will not identify site-specific proposals in the vegetation EIS, however we will add considerable site specificity to the analysis by describing and analyzing reasonable foreseeable management action scenarios.

Frances Werner: We know that many resource management plans contain EIS studies. Would it have been more beneficial to have the programmatic portion done earlier in these plans? *Gregg Simmons:* Yes, the programmatic documents provide best opportunities to address accumulative impacts.

Lamar Smith: Suggested that the subject title clouds the issue and perhaps the title could be clearer as to not cause doubt to whoever is reading the plans.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: BLM Statewide Planning Schedule, (Gregg Simmons, Senior Planning Coordinator for the State).

DISCUSSION: Gregg Simmons introduced himself as the Senior Planning Coordinator for the BLM-AZ. He gave a briefing on BLM Statewide Planning Schedule.

Report to Congress in January 2000, highlighted the Aging Condition of BLM's Land Use Planning and NEPA base. Some of the factors cited included significant increases in endangered species listings, expanding populations resulting in wildland/urban interface issues, increasing number of law suites, and declining/aging planning and NEPA workforce and expertise. As a result of the Report to Congress, BLM has received considerable bipartisan support with significant emphasis on updating BLM's Land Use Plans. We received flexible funding beginning in FY 2001 in the amount of \$19 million. In FY 2002 this amount was increased by \$7 million to \$26 million BLM-wide. In FY 2003 and subsequent years, the funding level is expected to be increased to \$50 million and remain at that level for the next 10 years.

In FY 2001 BLM initiated 42 new planning starts. The new Administration revision of this concept is called Time Sensitive Plans. These are:

- Plans that can be completed during this Administration.
- Plans emphasizing; energy development, public health and safety, and resource protection (such as the new National Monuments).

BLM has twenty-two time sensitive plans in which two are in AZ (the Las Cienegas NCA RMP and Bradshaw Foothill/Agua Fria National Monument). (See Handouts: #1. Table 1- Statistical Information for All Existing Land Use Plans, Arizona; #2. Resource Management Planning - Planning Status Update; #3. Bureau-wide Planning and Workload Measures Schedule; #4. Documents in PDF Format, for details). Gregg commented that when we are at the stage for public comment we will post them to the web page.

Steve Saway: Can Resource Development Plans and Wilderness Action Plans be developed at the same time? *Gregg Simmons:* Yes, the current BLM Planning Manual and Handbook provides guidance on developing both levels of planning decisions during a single planning effort. (An example: Lake Havasu Field Office is planning on developing three wilderness management plans during their RMP development process).

Lamar Smith: Is wondering what is the appropriate role of the RAC in the next few years in these plans. To what extent should the RAC be involved? Should there be a team similar to the Rangeland Resource Team? Over the first few years, the RAC kept its enthusiasm by helping to establish the Standards and Guidelines. Lamar believes the RAC needs something for them to really get involved in for future direction. *Denise Meridith:* Suggested the RAC can set up sub-teams or committees to work in developing these plans.

Frances Werner: When these public meetings are in our area perhaps we could use a phone tree to get the word out to the public.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Public Comment Period

DISCUSSION: None

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Field Office Rangeland Resource Team Member Proposals, (BLM Managers)

DISCUSSION: Tim Hughes of Phoenix Field Office stated that Glen Collins (former RAC member) has requested consideration for appointment as a member of the PFO Range Resource Team (RRT). PFO welcomes his participation. They still have a several openings on the RRT.

ACTIONS: Nomination approved.

AGENDA ITEMS: Reports from BLM Managers

DISCUSSION:

Tucson Field Office (TFO), (Tony Herrel for Shela McFarlin)

- Ironwood National Monument issues. Urbanization: working very hard to cleanup illegal dumping in

the area from nearby residents. Also trying to increase law enforcement patrols in the area. Traffic: a big increase in traffic is occurring on primitive roads in the area and also increase in OHV use along washes. Trying to increase our signage in the area and patrols. Increase of target shooting in area: creating safety problems for the local ranchers and some residents that live near the monument boundary. Increase in use is the result of population growth in the local area for the 30 to 35 thousand people that live in the Avara Valley Marana area, who live within 15 minutes of the area. This is their back yard.

- Las Cienegas: received several comment letters to the draft plan and will be working on responses, hopefully before May 2002. The overall results of the public scoping meetings were very positive and most of the comment letters received are mostly of clarification nature.
- San Pedro: working with the San Pedro Partnership to look at ways to implement conservation programs to reduce water consumption to enable the San Pedro River to remain flowing and allow for growth in Cochise County. There is a broad based participation from these groups including the City of Sierra Vista, Cochise County, Forest Service, AZ Dept. of Environmental Quality, AZ State Land Dept., National Park Service, Fort Huachuca, National Audubon Society, the Nature Conservancy, etc.
- Shela McFarlin is our new Field Manager. She officially reported to our office in November.
- Working with various recreation groups, particularly OHV through the Middle Gila Planning Partnership. Present and former members of the RAC have been extremely valuable to the success of this group. To date the Partnership has been very progressive and forward thinking in the role of the Partnership and are very supportive of inventory efforts in the area.

Havasup Field Office (LHFO), (Don Ellsworth)

- Received approval to write a new Resource Management Plan for the Field Office.
- Initiated Section 7 Consultation with USFWS in the process of preparing a Memorandum of Agreement for our work process on this document.
- Started our Public Scoping process. Have held 5 Open House Meetings (Parker, AZ; Bullhead City, AZ; Lake Havasu City, AZ; Salome, AZ; and Needles, AZ).
- Had a Nation-to-Nation Meeting with the Fort Mohave Tribe.
- Burros: working with BLM-CA, NFO, USFWS, Havasu Refuge, Chemewuive Tribe, and California Fish and Game, to come to common grounds for the management of Burros. Will follow the same process used in the south end of the river.
- Acquisitions: Purchased 20 acres in the Swansea Wilderness. Working on acquiring approximately 300 acres in the Dead Wilderness in California.

Kingman Field Office (KFO), (John Christensen)

- The economic stimulus package being debated in Congress contains about \$1.3 million for a new Kingman facility.
- Arrastra: Inholdings Access; Range Improvement Maintenance Plan (RIM).
- 1996 - Decisions were issued and approved by Ranchers and National Wildlife Federation.
- 1999 - IBLA ruled on appeal in favor of BLM decision.
- Jan 2001 - Assistant Secretary of the Interior Baca rescinded the decision.
- 2002 - The new Administration and new Assistant Secretary rescinded the previous Administrations rescission. Therefore we are back to the 1996 decision. However, we have been asked to wait 120 days while the U.S. Attorney, Permittees, and National Wildlife Federation negotiate on both decisions.

- KFO working on Standards and Guidelines assessments. Allotment evaluations currently underway are: Santa Maria Ranch, Santa Maria Community/Grapevine, Big Ranch, Cerbat, Quail Springs, Black Mesa.
- Additional evaluations initiated in FY 2002 will be: Fort McKwen, Diamond Bar, and Mineral Park. Scheduling a meeting with the Kingman/Lake Havasu RRT in January.
- Yesterday started to gather unauthorized cattle from Palmerita allotment.
- Monitoring OHV use and user demand at a location North of Golden Shores, AZ, near the Topock Marsh. (The 1,280 acres area was identified in the RMP for a possible OHV designation of "Open"). KFO will continue evaluation of OHV opportunities and conflicts in this location prior to initiating public scoping meetings in the spring.
- Big Sandy Energy Project: ACC denied project; reason were hydrology questions, endangered species consultation, Hualapai Nation concerns, TCP, etc. However, BLM and Western power are still processing E16 comments.

Phoenix Field Office (PFO), (Tim Hughes, Acting)

- Standards and Guidelines: 14 planned, 7 done, 7 carried over from FY 2001, and 1 carried over from FY 2000.
- Evaluations on 30 allotments are planned for FY 2002.
- Bradshaw Foothills/Agua Fria National Monument - currently in the data collection phase. Have a number of contractors collecting various resources data including cultural, hydrological, ESI, recreational use, commercial use and mapping. In the process of selecting the Prim Contractor for plan development. Federal Register Notice required to initiate scoping meetings is pending approval in Washington.
- Lower Gila/Sonoran Desert National Monument - developing a Preparation Plan for planning effort scheduled to start next year.
- Wildcat Shooting - we are participating in public meetings with the AZ Game and Fish and Forest Service on this issue.
- Preparing Federal Register Notices placing emergency closures on 2 urban parcels of public lands (115 Avenue and Camelback in the Agua Fria River bed, 80 acres. Issues: Dust/Air Quality/Criminal Activity/Public Safety; Sossaman and University Roads, 80 acres, Issues: Dust/Air Quality/Criminal Activity) in response to many complaints filed by local, county and state officials, as well as our legal requirements, to meet air quality standards.

Safford Field Office (SFO), (Bill Civish)

- Standards and Guidelines update: 13 final evaluations, 5 draft evaluations, 11 decisions issued, 1 protest, 30 allotments monitored, 19 allotments with evaluations in varying degree of completion, but not at final draft evaluation.
- FY 2002: 19 evaluations and 30 monitoring.
- Completed a very successful first year with the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Service and USFS cooperative monitoring agreement. Wilma Renken completed the majority of monitoring due to a shortage in our personnel staff.
- Monitoring will soon be a year ahead of evaluations; benefit will be no monitoring the same year evaluations are conducted. All data collected is being entered digitally and GIS database is being built.
- Jony Cockman (FO Monitoring Coordinator) came on board in January and is developing a comprehensive monitoring plan for the SFO. As it relates to S&G we are moving to a GIS based system with data files on by Ecological Sites. Result will be the development of Desired Plant

Community (Standard 3) objectives being built from this database.

- Gila Box Repackage - reinitiated Section 7 consultation for designated critical habitat for the spikedace and loach minnow on October 15, 2001. Currently waiting for an opinion. Repackage is in draft form. Proposal being reviewed by the National Landscape Conservation Office, Washington Planning Group, and the Solicitor's Office. SFO hopes to have a final guidance on the repackaging by mid-December 2001.
- Depending on guidance, SFO will prepare final repackaging/plan.
- Funds have been obligated for the printing of the repackaging this fiscal year.
- Hot Well Dunes - project funding through AZ State Parks OHV grant (3rd OHV grant). Received \$31,000 and BLM will match the amount in labor and equipment contributions. Project involves developing a wetlands/watchable wildlife area with associated facilities including parking area, pond enhancement/enlargement, toilet, ramadas, picnic tables, interpretive trail and wildlife viewing points. Deadline for using the grant money is November 2002. Much has been completed, still need to plant trees around the pond this spring and complete the interpretive trail with the use of volunteers.
- Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) Critical Path:
 - USFW waiting updates from Jim Tress of Westland Resources, contractor writing the Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan. Once received, USFW will issue their Biological Opinion. Updates required as a result of recent water model runs and updates. All other concerns have been resolved with USFW and a draft of their Biological Opinion has been reviewed.
 - SHPO received our Cultural Resource Treatment Plan. Upon concurrence, BLM will have completed its cultural resource analysis and consultations, enabling a release of the FEIS.
 - Washington Office investigating the nature and extent of impacts of Trust Resources of GRIC and SCAT (i.e. groundwater and surface water resources). SFO is waiting further guidance on the legality of impacting Trust Resources.
 - GRIC and SCAT informed of the project and potential impacts to Trust Assets at the Scoping and Draft EIS stages of the project. They submitted comments on the Draft EIS regarding these impacts. SFO attempting to consult by providing specific information on the nature and extent of impacts to groundwater and surface water resources. SFO has not been given an opportunity for meetings with SCAT, and have thus relied on written correspondence to disseminate the information to them. Have met with GRIC Natural Resource Standing Committee and their legal council; meeting continuance set for December 7.
- Dos Pobres/San Juan Mining Plan of Operations/Land Exchange - BLM is processing a proposed mining plan of operations from Phelps Dodge Corporation for a major new open pit copper mine, located approximately eight miles north of Safford in Graham County, AZ. (See Briefing Document handout).

Arizona Strip Field Office, (Roger Taylor)

- Planning effort: developing one plan for the entire AZ Strip area, however the outcome of the planning effort will be three stand alone plans; one of the GC-Parashant National Monument, one for the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, and a plan revision for the remaining 1.7 million acres outside of the Monuments. Issues to be dealt with are route designations, wilderness, ecological restoration and maintaining the remoteness of the Arizona Strip.
- Will holding a series of Community Based Stewardship sessions across Northern Arizona and southern Utah in preparation for the planning effort.
- 25 Condors are in the wild and 11 young birds in the holding pens. Next release will be sometime

after the New Year.

- Thinking about holding a Celebration for the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument in conjunction with the next release. Will get the release date to the RAC members as soon as it is scheduled.

Yuma Field Office (YFO)

- No report.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Reports from the Standards and Guidelines Working Group; RAC Discussion on Rangeland Resource Teams' Progress, (Lamar Smith, Chair)

DISCUSSION: No report was presented on Standards and Guidelines was given at this time. Lamar Smith suggested a workshop be conducted on Standards and Guidelines to benefit the new RAC members. It was agreed to do so at a future meeting.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Report From the Public Relations Working Group - Discussion of National Landscape Conservation System Public Document, (Ken Mahoney, BLM Wilderness Specialist)

DISCUSSION: Ken Mahoney handed out the revised AZ National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) Public Strategy Document, which incorporated comments received from the Recreation Subgroup and RAC at their last meetings. Ken asked the RAC to look over the document one more time and supply any further suggestions to him within the next couple of weeks. Once the strategy text is finalized, the document will be formatted for public presentation and printed for distribution. Steve Saway volunteered to put together the *RAC Notes* and forward them to Deborah Stevens for mailing.

ACTION: Ken Mahoney asked the RAC to provide him with their final comments on AZ NLCS Public Strategy Document draft in the next two weeks.

AGENDA ITEM: RAC Discussion on Recreation and Tourism Working Group, (Sandee McCullen, RAC member)

DISCUSSION: The Middle Gila Partnership (MGCP) was originally formed as a result of a problem or miscommunication re issuing a recreational permit for a 4x4 completion in 1999. The RAC members looked into the "how" of combining recreational use and access, while still complimenting the cultural, historical and beauty of this area with as little impact as possible.

Following the initial meeting it was decided the entire area (Game & Fish 37B) appeared to be an ideal area to plan for a multi-use recreational area. The surrounding city councils and governments were invited, land agencies, surrounding Tribal Nations and the users of the land -- ranchers and recreation enthusiasts alike.

The MGCP meets monthly with approximately 30 active members. The mailing list is about 300 and we encourage anyone interested to join us.

The project is definitely a “pilot” as there are a number of OHV designated parks across the country but none as large or as diverse. The goal is to offer all recreationists a quality area to recreate while at the same time protecting our natural, cultural, and historical assets; and be compatible with endangered species or noxious weed issues in this area. There will be hiking trails, ATV tracks, Motocross, 4x4 trails, quality rock crawling areas, and OHV “play” areas complimented by camping areas; and RV ready as well as primitive will be offered. There will be Cultural Information Centers (hopefully within some historical buildings in the area), and will have guides or stewards designated for areas of interest. Commercial tourism will also be active within this area.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Report from Wild Horse and Burro Working Group, (Frances Werner, Chair)

DISCUSSION: Frances Werner introduced Steve Gobat, Acting Deputy State Director of Resources, BLM-AZ State Office. Steve opened by saying BLM hopes to almost double adoptions in the next two years. This will require each state to provide assistance in conducting adoptions in areas with high potential for adopting large numbers of animals such as Florida and California.

BLM-AZ has eleven in-state adoptions scheduled for next year. We may have to drop one or more local adoptions in order to support the national effort. (See handout AZ Wild Horse and Burro Program Summary FY 2002, for list of FY 2001 accomplishments).

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: RAC Discussion on Future Meetings/Locations

DISCUSSION: Future Agenda items for Presentations:

- AZ Supreme Court Ruling on State Land Grazing Leases
- Status of the National Mountain Biking Strategy
- ASARCO Mining Issue
- Mining-split Estate
- BLM International Program

ACTION: Next meeting will be February 28 - March 1, 2002, Tucson, AZ. (1st day: Ironwood National Monument and ASARCO Mine Tours; 2nd day: Business Meeting).